Not in Wing

A Letter to a Friend.

PErhaps Mankind might not be the worse for parting with some of the Myſteries of Prieſt-craft; but the Morality of the Decalogue makes it as Convenient, as it is Divine. It will be a difficult Thing to maintain good Order in Families, if Children may Diſobey and Diſhonour their Parents; Property, if all have a Licenſe to ſteal; Truth, if it is no longer a fault to belie and bear falſe witneſs againſt our Neighbours. I know a Prince that has conquered all Senſe of theſe Commandments, has coveted and weare his Neighbour's, his Father's Crown, and taken God's Name in his Mouth, and in Vain, to colour over the Murthers he with his Armies, Judges, and Juries commits, and the Perjuries to which he enſlaves others, and Clergy-men themſelves, who ought to have been Innocent and Unſpotted, that their Converſations, as well as their Pulpits, might have taught their Blocks. I wiſh, for the ſake of the World, the Examples of Princes and Prieſts, may not be too prevalent; or, that they would publiſh, what School-diſtinction makes theſe Things lawful for them, that are probibited to Subjects and the Laity: Religion is uſeful here, as well as promiſes Happineſs hereafter. I would have that Sacred awe, that due regard to it, kept up in the Minds of Men, that is neceſſary to our Well-being in this, and our hopes of a better Life. I ſhould be ſorry to ſee the World fully perſuaded, that it is a Juggle between the Learned and the Great, and am ſorry that a late Change gives too much Umbrage for ſuch a Suggeſtion. I had rather have a comprehenſive Arch-biſhop, and that he ſhould never paſs through Water Baptiſm, nor believe the *Athanaſian* Creed, than that he ſhould pare off moral Virtue, or leave us leſs than Heathens. Parricide was not uſed in all their Panegyricks to finiſh the Hero, Oaths were held Sacred, and Alliances too: Nor do I remember one Inſtance, where there was ſuch complicated Villany committed, as I could give a freſh Inſtance of, to obtain Greatneſs; no, it was their ſevere Philoſophy, their Juſtice, their Honour, as well as the Diſcipline of their Armies, made way for the Roman Conqueſts: They ſeldom taught the Subjects of Neighbouring Princes to Rebel, irritated them to Diſcontents and Faction, or invited them to their Banners: Paganiſm was not inſtructed in this Art of War, but it is the peculiar Diſcovery of ſome late Reformers, who are not much the better for their Chriſtianity. But I ſhall leave every Body to their own Reflections, and they may eaſily find how agreeable theſe Things are to Religion, and how much it is mended: Yet, by the way, I have ſtill one remaining Fear in Church Matters; If the Gentleman that could not be choſen Prolocutor to the Convocation, can now, in his greater Poſt, influence the Clergy into State

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Articles and State Diſcipline; Comprehenſion is worſe, both for the Church of *England* Men and Diſſenters, for neither of them then will unmixedly, and conſcientiouſly enjoy their own Opinions; and though the Communion will be enlarged, it will be by making both Parties Hypocrites; and though thoſe that are left out of the Project may have Liberty for a time, yet that will be in Danger, unleſs the Spirit of the Presbyterians is ſweetned farther of late, than was common heretofore with that Sect; who, becauſe they think Men predeſtinated to eternal Puniſhment in the next World, begin that doom with them here, as ſoon as they who are God's Miniſters, or rather Executioners have Power. But let us ſee how much our Conſtitution is amended, by all the ſteps that our Patriots have taken. A Diſputed Election, and ſuch a one as the Whiggs never liked before, recommended Mr. *Powle* to the Speaker's Chair. I do not know whether it will be allowed to publiſh my private Senſe concerning the Authority of Parliaments; I think them rather deputed by the People, under the Inſtructions of our Common Laws, and bounded by our Common Rights, than ſuch Plenipotentiary Powers as may give away at their Pleaſure the Lives and Liberties of the Subject. Therefore I have ſeriouſly queſtioned whether that Parliament which was of K. *W.* and Self-creation, (and in its own Nature a Convention, ſummoned without Writs, I had like to have ſaid without Authority,) I ſay, I have queſtioned whether the Members of that Parliament did not exceed their Commiſſion, whilſt, contrary to the known Laws of *England*, they ſuſpended the *Habeas Corpus*, (which was the Right of every Engliſh Man by Writ, before it was by Statute,) and enacted Martial Law. Theſe Things were done by that Convention, and the preſent Parliament lets them all paſs: I muſt confeſs I am unwilling to allow even a Parliament Omnipotent and Infallible: There was an antient Cuſtom for the Electors to give their Repreſentatives Inſtructions when they choſe them; I wish it had been revived at the beginning of this Revolution, perhaps there had not been then ſuch Infractions made upon our Conſtitution; our Government had not been changed into Elective; our Liberties proſtituted to the Will of Six Privy-Counſellours; nor a poor Fellow Hang'd, who, for his Family's ſake, deſerted his Captain, who had liſted him when he was Drunk; nor ſo many Shot and Hang'd for trivial Crimes. I think they may as well make a Law to kill every Old Man that is paſt ſerving the Common-wealth, and drown all Ill-favour'd Children, or enact any other extravagant Thing that ſeems good to them and their King; and they may take away two thirds of every Man's Eſtate, that has not a very good and powerful Friend in the Houſe. Indeed I muſt allow, if they may act as they pleaſe and uncontrollably, theſe Things they may do. But this Thought of raiſing Money, as unreaſonably as they pleaſe, puts me in mind of a new Project, I hear is to be offered at the next Seſſion of this Parliament. King *James* indeed had none; but how much did we complain in King *Charles* the Second's Time of Polls and Subſidies: But to this Gentleman we have paid two Polls, and near half our Incomes, conſidering the ſcarcity of Trade and of Money; and now the new Project is for a *General Exciſe*. If Mr. *Hampden* adviſed the laying aſide Chimny-money, becauſe it was popular ſo to do, he

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ought to ſpeak earneſtly againſt this; That indeed view'd our Purſes, but this viſits our Chefts, and our Wardrobes, our Cellars, and Larders, every Thing we eat, we drink, or we wear. Muſt our Tables be ſpoiled that the Dutch may keep better? Muſt the antient Hoſpitality of *England* be deſtroy'd, by a Hogan Mogan Art of Taxing? Muſt we not only pay Yearly and Monthly Contributions, but every Market Day, every time we buy a pair of Shoes, a Hat, Butter, or Eggs? Is this the Deliverance we were promiſed? We ſhall be delivered indeed from our Plenty, and our Caſh; at this rate we muſt not luſt after the Fleſh-pots of Old *England*, but like the Boars of *Holland* feed upon Onions and Roots: This benefit indeed we ſhall have, Temperance will be a Virtue much in practice, though perhaps it will be to make a Virtue of Neceſſity. There is a certain Prince in the World found Methods to ſubjugate a Neighbouring Common-wealth, and to put an end to the flouriſhing Condition, that true Liberty, to which the moſt univerſal Spirit, the Noble *de Wit* had brought his Countrey: A Man that could make his own Countrey-men Slaves; could trample upon their Liberties, where native Soil, old Acquaintance, and the Conſtitution under which he was bred, pleaded againſt him; may from being a real King in *Holland*, though without the Name, be elſe where under that Name, a thorough Tyrant. His kindneſs to us has been ſeen in many Inſtances, by the Care taken to let ſo many Thouſands periſh in *Ireland*, under *Schombergh*, for want of Proviſions, and on Board the Fleet by bad; by the daily Exportation of our Coin, by the putting Embargoes upon all our Ships this time two Years, whilſt another People ſent their Merchant-men well convoy'd to all Parts of the World; and now at laſt, to mention no more, he will ſhew it by ſetting forward ſuch a Taxation, as was never known in theſe Nations: But Ruling is all his Aim, and that with a high hand too; he has choſen ſuch Miniſters as are fit for the Deſign. But there is no Ruling this Nation in ſuch an Arbitrary manner, without Impoveriſhing it firſt; and ſince it is not quite time of day to ſet up for it by his Foreign Troops, he imploys his Emiſſaries to wheedle Mankind into Poverty, and he knows that will end where he would wiſh. I have only hinted at this new Project to awaken the Genius of the People; I know it is yet only talked of in Cabals, and by the Confidents of the Court: But if I find theſe Knaves proſelite Fools; I ſhall, for my Countries ſake, take a more particular Care to publiſh ſomething to expoſe this laſt and true Impreſſion of Slavery. The Members in Parliament indeed may make it eaſie enough for their own Intereſt, may perhaps nominate Collectors, put in their Friends, and their poor Kindred, and may be themſelves, or place their Sons in ſome of the better Offices; but we may expect the reſt of the World will be left out in the Benefit, and will ſhare in the Burthen, and more than ſhare too, unleſs the *Officer'd Parliament* will quit the Pentions theſe Impoſitions muſt pay. But there is yet behind a more fatal Inconvenience; Land Taxes are uſed to ceaſe, but this will be hard to get back; and you are never to hope it, unleſs you make it one of the Terms of another Revolution. Perhaps you will ſay it ſhall be only a Temporary Aſſeſſment, and during this War, and that there ſhall be good Proviſion made againſt a Continuance: But I know a Gentleman that could

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have reduced *Ireland* very easily at first, but was advised it was better to make that Countrey a good pretence to keep an Army on foot, and so exhaust our Pockets. We have all along had the same President of our Councils, and a Nest Egg may be left to hatch a Tumult withall, if so convenient a Branch of the Revenue should be in danger of going off.

The Protector began the Excise of Ale and Beer, and you see Three succeeding Kings have continued it; and if a General Excise is once granted, it will as certainly be continued in all Reigns. All Kings will struggle for it: It will not only prodigiously encrease their Revenues, but strengthen their Authority: It will be a Prerogative Tax: It will regulate Corporations with a witness, and root up the ancient Foundations of our English Government. The Influence that the Officers which will be sent into every Man's House and Shop will have upon Elections of Members, will make even our Parliaments more the Representatives of the Excise Office, than of the Kingdom; and considering how many it will employ, no Prince that has it need have any other standing Army; by a moderate Computation it will not employ much less than *Sixty five Thousand Men*, who will be Slaves to the Crown, and joyn to make us so. It is now we want a brave *Jack Ayliffe*, to put a Wooden Shoe into the Speaker's Chair.

Thus, Sir, you see I have, with the freedom you Commanded, sent you my Thoughts of publick Affairs.

I am Yours, &c.

June 4. 1691.

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